

## **AP Authors/ Student Recommendations (2012-2016)**

### **Chinua Achebe** by Lydia Gottwald

I highly recommend reading Chinua Achebe's works. His books are very interesting and give a new perspective on colonial Africa that is not often seen in the history of literature. His works allow you to understand a culture that is totally different than our own, allowing us to see the hypocrisy of our western governments. Achebe's works are fairly easy to read and are relatively short. However, Chinua Achebe is a bit harder to do for the research itself because most literary criticisms of his works are written at higher college level and are more difficult to understand. Achebe's biography is easy to do though because of how much he accomplished in his life. Overall, I enjoyed researching Chinua Achebe, I thought his books were very interesting and I learned a lot.

### **Maya Angelou** by Mariah Collins

I highly recommend Maya Angelou as a topic for senior research. Although her only usable works were autobiographies, they were full of insightful and compelling stories about overcoming the odds. Her language flowed beautifully and poetically and best of all it was easy to understand! I was able to find so much literary criticism and information on her most famous work *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, but it was more difficult to find such information about the other autobiographies. If I were to do this process over again, I would definitely choose Angelou. She is an amazing inspiration, has worn many hats, and has lived a fascinating life. As of today, she is still living and continues to leave an impression on people far and wide.

### **Jane Austen** – Samantha Smith

Personally, I loved studying Jane Austen for senior research. There is so much information available online and at the high school library about her. I would definitely recommend Jane Austen if you are into romantic novels with happy endings. Her stories are easy to understand even though they have rich vocabulary and descriptive scenery. Jane Austen wrote many novels in her lifetime so there is a good variety of books too choose from. The books all have common themes interlacing with each other, this helped with the final paper! Overall I loved having a more in-depth study of Jane Austen!

### **Jane Austen** by Janine Fatal

I highly recommend Jane Austen, one of the greatest English writers of all time, for senior research. Her novels have attained world wide popularity – and they definitely deserve it! I found Jane Austen's novels very inspiring because she went against all of the constraints that society had on women and on classes in her time period. All of her novels have thorough meaning and are very descriptive, so it is easy to imagine what is going and to get immersed in the novels.

However, her novels such as Pride and Prejudice can be very long and sometimes difficult to read because of her use of advanced vocabulary and the overall language of the time period. If you want to study Jane Austen for senior research, it would be a great idea to read her novels for summer reading so that you have more time to space out the reading and understand the novels. Also, it will already get you thinking, which can be very helpful when it comes time to actually start senior research. Because Jane Austen is such a classic, well-known, and unforgettable author, there are many resources available, both online and in the library, when it comes time to research her biography and literary criticism. My last suggestion is that if you study Jane Austen, you should read Sense and Sensibility because it is very interesting how the language of the characters reveals Austen's own views on society. Researching Austen is truly interesting and inspiring, and definitely worth choosing for senior research! ☺ Lastly, no matter who you choose, make sure you manage your time well and do not procrastinate!!

#### **Jane Austen** by Annalise Deschenes

If you're thinking about researching Jane Austen for senior research, here's a few things you should know:

- 1) There's tons of information out there about her – perfect for when it comes time for finding both literary criticisms and biographical information. There's plenty of books in the library (I would suggest looking through Novels for Students) and even more reliable sources online.
- 2) Her books star female protagonists and all have happy endings – I personally think she's like the Nicholas Sparks of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 3) The vocabulary and language she uses are not always user-friendly – it can be hard to read sometimes! But if you get into the novel it's easy to push through the harder parts.
- 4) Her books are funny! Now, it's not all the time, but go ahead and read the first chapter of Pride and Prejudice and laugh it up – Austen loves to make fun of slightly ridiculous characters like Mrs. Bennet.

Finally, senior research is not as difficult or scary as it seems. If you do the work and meet the deadlines Brock sets, it can be a stress-free project.

#### **Charlotte and Emily Bronte** by Nadia Dodge

I recommend my authors, Charlotte and Emily Bronte because they were revolutionary writers. They were some of the first female authors to explore gothic fiction and they did it with style. They were by no means afraid to make their opinions clear about 19<sup>th</sup> century culture and the inequalities that women faced. I would definitely recommend this to the girls however it may be a bit too romantic for the gentlemen. It definitely seemed a little overwhelming at times to have to study two authors but at the same time, it's twice the information, right?? Overall the books are fairly easy to understand and extremely well written and their tragically short lives make for an eye-opening biography as well. Lastly, the books are quite lengthy and stuffed with details so get a started with the reading as soon as you can!

### **Charlotte and Emily Brontë** by Sebastiana Redford

I enjoyed doing my research on the Brontë sisters. I loved reading works by Charlotte, but I found *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë to be a bit dry. At first I thought it would be difficult having two authors but I found that it was very easy. There was a lot of biographical information on the sisters so I had no trouble writing my biography essay. Originally I planned to focus my research paper on the gothic style present in all of their novels, but there were little to no criticisms on this topic. If you decide to research the Brontë sisters I suggest you center your thesis around feminism. This was a prevalent theme in all of the works that I read, and there was an overwhelming abundance of criticisms on this. Overall, I found the Brontë's enjoyable as well as easy authors to complete my research on.

### **Anton Chekhov-** by Micaela Carswell

Personally, I do not recommend Anton Chekhov. Chekhov had a sad and slightly boring life. He may seem interesting because he was abused by an alcoholic father and then went in to medicine. Unfortunately, it's just sad. There is little on his medical career, and he died at an early age from TB. His plays are famous for having no plot. They can be difficult to read and follow since Russians love having five-part names. Overall, I found Chekhov to be dull and unappealing, although you learn about an obscure writer.

### **Charles Dickens** by Michaela Fredette

I highly recommend choosing Charles Dickens as an author for AP Senior Research. Although his novels are intimidating and long, they are all very well written, easy to become engaged in, and hold meaningful themes and lessons within them. Reading his novels were definitely a challenge and something to get used to, but after reading the first novel, the rest become very easy to read. For those considering choosing Dickens as an author, I definitely recommend reading some of his novels over the summer. I found that having to read his novels in addition to the other AP books a challenge. Finding the criticism Dickens' novels was quite easy. There were both books and many sources online with a variety of criticism on his novels. Of the novels that I read, Oliver Twist, Great Expectations, and A Christmas Carol, I found that Oliver Twist was the easiest to find information for and Great Expectations was more of a challenge. I found that for the first paper, the biography, it was very easy to find information and books about his life. There were many significant aspects of his life that were reflected through his books which made writing both papers very easy. In addition, almost all of Dickens' novels revolve around similar themes and contain very similar messages which made creating a thesis very quick and easy. Dickens is a great author and makes for a great Senior Research author.

### **Fyodor Dostoyevsky** by Patrick Fuller

I recommend the author Fyodor Dostoyevsky to anyone who is doing senior research. Although his books are long, very long as a matter of fact, he still manages to keep the reader wrapped up in his many psychologically based stories. Dostoyevsky has also led a very intriguing life filled with many fate driven escapes. The only downside to his books that comes to mind is the fact that, like many other Russian authors, Dostoyevsky uses multiple names for each character and this can sometimes make things difficult to understand. However, Dostoyevsky is still a fantastic author.

### **Fyodor Dostoyevsky** by: Delane Zahoruiko

If you like stories with dark suspense, crazy plot lines, philosophical theories, characters that test the boundaries of the human psyche, or Existentialism, then Fyodor Dostoyevsky would definitely be a good choice for summer reading and Senior Research. However, if you do not like long stories, stories with countless characters, or stories with – sometimes – confusing plot lines, then Dostoyevsky is not the author for you. His name may be difficult to say; however, Dostoyevsky's novels can be even more difficult to read. Choose Dostoyevsky if you are looking for a challenge. The three books that I found to be the most well known are: *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *Notes from the Underground*. If you are thinking of using Dostoyevsky as your Senior Research author, I would recommend these three novels, in particular, because many critical analyses are written about them. Also, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* both exceed 600 pages; while *Notes from the Underground* is just over 100 pages. So it would be best to read the longer ones over the summer to gain a better understanding of the novels. I made this mistake and tried reading *The Brothers Karamazov* during the school year which was a bad choice because I felt rushed when reading. Even though I was rushed, this novel is probably my favorite I have ever read. There are many common themes throughout Dostoyevsky's novels; therefore, finding a connection and writing your thesis for Senior Research will be easy. Dostoyevsky was a man of his time writing within the boundaries of his own complex life experiences, during a time in Russia's history that contrasts human psyche in its struggle for intellectual and spiritual freedom. Dostoyevsky is in a league of his own and would be a great author for anyone willing to challenge themselves.

### **Fyodor Dostoyevsky** by Emily Myer

I would absolutely recommend Dostoyevsky for senior research. His novels are long, but they are classics, and though they took me while to get through, they were easy to understand. It was harder than I thought it would be to find criticisms, seeing as he is such a famous author, but I did manage to get what I needed. The biography part for Dostoyevsky was easy – there is lots of information out there on him. His most famous novels include The Idiot, The Brothers Karamazov, and Crime and Punishment. When I mentioned Dostoyevsky's name to people who asked about my senior research, nobody really knew who he was, but as soon as I said Crime and Punishment they recognized the title. It's a really great thing to know a lot about a subject that most people have only heard of. Even though presentations are over, I will

continue to seek out Dostoyevsky's books and I know I will end up rereading his books later in my life due to the great effect they had on me now.

### **William Faulkner** by Jesse Rowan

William Faulkner is not for the casual reader. In fact he is not an author who should ever be read for enjoyment. I would argue that it is nearly impossible to enjoy a William Faulkner novel unless you are critically studying it--and even then, you need a deep understanding and appreciation for it to fully enjoy it. The first time--and the second, third, and fourth--I read a Faulkner novel, I had no idea what was happening. The plot was impossible to follow and the stream-of-consciousness language was frustratingly incomprehensible. However, were I able to rewind time back to the beginning of the year, I would choose him all over again. Despite that it was frustrating, I developed a great appreciation for Faulkner. I learned to love his writing and, in particular, his ability to create life-like characters. Now that I've read several of his novels, I've learned how to read his books, and after critically studying them, I've learned that they are brimming with thematic truth and depth that's invisible from the surface. I would recommend, if someone were to study Faulkner, that they definitely begin with *As I Lay Dying*, because it is the most accessible. However, *The Sound and the Fury* has possibly the most depth of characters, and is Faulkner's most widely renowned novel. Despite this, *Absalom, Absalom!* was my favorite of the novels, as the plot was intriguing and there were elements I have not encountered in any other novel. I would recommend Faulkner to anybody who thinks they can manage his dense and complicated writing. I would recommend Faulkner to whomever has a deep appreciation for literature and nobody else.

### **William Faulkner** Review by Lydia Mercier

I absolutely loved doing my senior research on William Faulkner. Going in to it, I was slightly apprehensive that some of his novels would be difficult to read. Although they were challenging, they were certainly not impossible to understand, and I really enjoyed reading them in the end. Faulkner is undoubtedly one of my favorite authors. The best part about studying Faulkner was that it was really easy to find connections throughout all of the novels. Faulkner wrote a series of fifteen novels that all take place in his fictional Yoknapatawpha County, complete with recurring characters, conflicts, and themes. The similarity between all of the novels is intentional and, therefore, is very easy and interesting to analyze. I highly recommend his work.

### **F. Scott Fitzgerald** by Jesse Magnifico

This year in AP Literature, I was fortunate enough to be able to select F. Scott Fitzgerald for my Senior Research presentation. Fitzgerald is known as one of the greatest authors of all time, largely due to his most famous novel *The Great Gatsby*. The spectacles of his life, literary failure, and chronic heartache, all which Fitzgerald faced, appear throughout his novels. Writing about his personal experiences, while modeling characters directly off of people in his life, makes Fitzgerald's stories and characters extremely realistic and believable. Perhaps the most

remarkable aspect within his novels, is Fitzgerald's incredible, accurate depiction of society and people "trapped" in the infamous era known as the Jazz Age- the 1920's. These aspects, to name a few, make F. Scott Fitzgerald such a renowned author. If you are looking for an incredibly interesting author, a thrilling life story, and the man behind *The Great Gatsby*, then I highly recommend F. Scott Fitzgerald for Senior Research.

#### **F. Scott Fitzgerald** by Patrick Halloran

Overall, I thought F. Scott Fitzgerald was a great author to choose for a senior research topic. He is obviously very well known, and his books are praised. Therefore, there are a lot of criticisms for his novels. I read *Tender is the Night*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *This Side of Paradise* (in that order). I did not have a problem finding critiques with any of these books. My advice to anyone who chooses Fitzgerald is to read his books in the order he published them. In my case, I wish I had read them in this order: *This Side of Paradise*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Tender is the Night*. This is because you get to see his growth as an author and see how he develops. I advise that whoever you choose, to read their books in order of publication if you get the chance. F. Scott Fitzgerald was a great author to read. I enjoyed all of his books and learning about his crazy life. I highly recommend Fitzgerald to anyone and everyone. I feel that no matter your preference, you'll be able to enjoy Fitzgerald like I did.

#### **F. Scott Fitzgerald** by Patrick Scanlon

I'd like to start this off by strongly recommending you to read these because it could make a huge difference on your choice. Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was a great author to read. If you are a fan of history then this is an author you should definitely choose. He paints a beautiful picture of what life was like for the affluent in the "Roaring Twenties" a term he coined. *The Great Gatsby* is the best book I have ever read. The inner struggles and torments that Gatsby experiences are so in depth you feel as though you are with Gatsby in a room. Throughout all his novels, you will learn how important love was to Fitzgerald. He wrote about what he knew and that is very obvious throughout his works. His family life comes into the text, and the reader can see how Fitzgerald himself grows and matures throughout his novels. I strongly recommend Fitzgerald if you are looking for a great author that is attention grabbing, and writes relatively short books.

#### **F. Scott Fitzgerald:** Hayley Tagliente

I would highly recommend my author for a senior research topic. Fitzgerald is a very well-known author, mostly due to his novel *The Great Gatsby* and its recent movie franchise. The three books I read were *This Side of Paradise*, *The Great Gatsby* (which you also read as a class), and *The Love of the Last Tycoon*. Being his most famous novel, it was extremely easy to find criticisms on *The Great Gatsby*. *The Love of the Last Tycoon* was unfinished before his death, thus it doesn't have a clear ending and a limited number of criticisms, so I would suggest choosing one of his other novels to study instead. All of Fitzgerald's novels mimic the issues he faced in his life, making it easier to create a biographical thesis showing the influences his life

had on his writing. The themes he presents in all his novels range from hardships with love to the negative effects of wealth, so there are numerous ones you can focus on for the critical essay. His overall writing style is not too complex, and none of the novels are excessive in length. If you have any interest in learning more about the exciting lifestyle of the wealthy during the 1910s-1940s, I would urge you to consider Fitzgerald as your senior research author. And remember, meeting deadlines is good ☺ and wasting time is bad ☹!

#### **F. Scott Fitzgerald** by Maeve Cronin

For my AP Research, I chose to do F. Scott Fitzgerald. His life is incredibly fascinating and is really, really interesting to study and learn about. Everything he writes connects to his life so for me, that was my favorite part of researching him. I read *Tender is the Night*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *The Beautiful and Damned* and unfortunately, *Tender is the Night* and *The Beautiful and Damned* weren't nearly as exciting to read as *The Great Gatsby*. I enjoyed them, but *The Great Gatsby* is definitely Fitzgerald's best work. However, his books aren't written with intense and deep language, so I found them really easy to read. The only issue with Fitzgerald is that he's super popular, so it's pretty much guaranteed at least two people in class will want to do him, so if your heart is set on him, it might be worth it to find a good second choice. I loved him nonetheless and would gladly recommend him to anyone interested in his life and work.

#### **F. Scott Fitzgerald** by Bradley Kelleher

First off I would like to say how Brock is the coolest teacher you will ever have in high school and she makes senior research a lot less scary than people hype it up to be. Now with that said, I chose F. Scott Fitzgerald for my senior research author. I would really recommend him if you like a man with a very sad and depressing background but writes amazing novels. Even though he has a sad and depressing life he is also a very interesting author. It is not hard to find biography info on him. His novels are also fairly short and are very interesting to read. I read *The Great Gatsby*, *This Side of Paradise*, and *The Last Tycoon*. I really enjoyed *The Great Gatsby* and *The Last Tycoon*, both very short novels and easy to interpret. *This Side of Paradise* was a little hard for me to understand but once you re-read and research more about the novel it makes more sense and is actually very interesting. However I did have a little trouble finding a common thread to all his novels, but with a little thinking you will have no problem. Literary criticisms are not hard to find on Fitzgerald since he is a very renowned author, however that all depends on the common thread you use. The biography on Fitzgerald, I have to say is very easy. He is a very popular author so finding biographical information is not hard. Don't choose him just because he is easy. To be completely honest, Fitzgerald is a very interesting man with a very fascinating background. His novels are beautiful and send a very meaningful message. I would recommend F. Scott Fitzgerald to anyone for senior research he is a fantastic author and I really enjoyed researching him. Finally, senior research is just another presentation it really isn't that bad! GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!!!

#### **Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald** by Danny Welch

I am going to be completely honest. When I first discovered that taking AP Lit meant that I had to do my senior research presentation on an author, I was not too thrilled. I thought that I would much rather do my research paper on something I was passionate about, but as my friends in Honors English struggled to come up with a topic or any thesis to support that topic, I was glad that I had good old F. Scott Fitzgerald. I would highly suggest Fitzgerald to anyone in the coming class. He wrote captivating, exciting books and had an interesting life. I was rarely bored in researching Fitzgerald as there was so much to learn about his life and his writing. I enjoyed reading his books, both from an entertainment and a literary standpoint. The books I read were filled with action and drama unlike Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, which you will be forced to read. Along with entertainment, Fitzgerald's books also showed clear themes that were easy to implement in my thesis statement. One thing I struggled with in doing F. Scott Fitzgerald was making a clear separation between his biography and his books. As you research, you will find that Fitzgerald's books have clear parallels to his own life. In writing my biography essay, I constantly found myself talking about Fitzgerald's books rather than his life because they were so similar and I enjoyed making the connections. I hope that you choose to research F. Scott Fitzgerald because he was a legend, but I have two key points of advice. First, do not try to read any of his collections of short stories as one of your works. They are short and sweet, but attempting to do numerous journal entries on stories that are twenty pages long is nearly impossible. My second, and most important, piece of advice is: "get *Gatsby*". If there are two people in your class researching F. Scott Fitzgerald, which there probably will be because he is awesome, only one of you can analyze *The Great Gatsby* in your presentation. I assure you that *Gatsby* will be your favorite of Fitzgerald's books, so just remember to claim it way in advance or you may just end up losing it with the flip of a coin.

### **E.M. Forster** by Libby O'Neill

This past summer I choose my author at random and I definitely do not recommend that choice. I would strongly suggest taking just a little bit of time to research a few key facts about the authors listed such as, major themes they tend to focus on and what genre they are drawn to. E.M. Forster was the author I choose and I would not recommend him to an incoming student. His books were not dreadful to read but I did not find any of the three books I choose (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *A Passage to India*, and *Howards End*) truly enjoyable. The main reason I do not recommend E.M. Forster to future students is because it was difficult to find information on him. I found my self to be a tad overwhelmed during the research process because I struggled to find articles that had to do with the thesis I found. This brings me to my last point about the "common thread" or thesis for E.M. Forster. It is difficult to take a unique approach with Forster's works because there is only one prominent theme throughout all his novels. Sarah Pelletier and I both choose Forster and, without knowing, we both ended up having very similar thesis statements. He was an interesting individual during his time but due to the lacking information I would save yourself the trouble and choose a more well known author.



### **E. M. Forster** by Sarah Pelletier

I would not recommend Forster. Though I enjoyed his novels, there are so many characters in them that it becomes difficult to keep up at times. When choosing him I thought more about the novels than the research papers, which was a bad choice. There is not a lot of information about Forster and the information that is out there contradicts each other. For example, source A may say he switched schools one year but source B will state that he switched schools five years later than source A said. Because of this confusion, writing the biography paper was difficult. The second research essay, on the other hand, was a lot easier to find information on. The literary analysis works were found a lot easier. If one were insistent on choosing him, I would have to say that my favorite part about his novels was his importance of healthy relationships and how certain dysfunctional relationships displayed issues in society.

### **Lorraine Hansberry** by Caroline Uhlarik

I highly recommend choosing Lorraine Hansberry as an author for Senior Research. She writes about the time period when racism was a huge issue in the country. As a young African American playwright, Hansberry writes with her passion to chase racism and unfair civil rights away. Her plays are not long length wise and most have an easy topic to follow. With this in mind, reading the required material was found to be stress free. I personally enjoyed her writing style which always had African American characters that were driven with Hansberry's thoughts and values. Being a girl, it was pleasurable to research such a strong-minded woman figure and be able to go into depth with her writings and life background. I had great results when searching for information on Hansberry. There were many websites and other resources that were available without hassle. Lorraine Hansberry has an interesting life story, intriguing plays, and plenty of relatable references. All in all, Lorraine Hansberry makes for a great author to choose for Senior Research.

### **Ernest Hemingway** by Matt Camilliere

Ernest Hemingway's life was definitely more fun and interesting to learn about compared to reading his books. Hemingway is known for getting straight to the point in all his books. No hidden meanings and no indirect symbolism. Through his concise prose Hemingway wrote some very boring novels. I enjoyed The Old Man and the Sea, but I feel as though someone could have summarized any of his books for me in five minutes. Although his books may be boring, he always has a good message for the reader to receive. Do I recommend Ernest Hemingway to a future student? Yes! I enjoyed learning about his life and seeing the references to it within his novels.

### **Ernest Hemingway** by Jonah Einson

If you're looking for an adventure, in an author's life, and in the stories he wrote, look no farther than Ernest Hemingway. I found that from researching Hemingway, he deserves his reputation

as a “manly man” to the fullest extent. Ernest Hemingway earned his title through his writing and his own life, which was full of tragedy, war, and alcohol. Coincidentally, many of Ernest Hemingway’s stories have themes that are somewhat autobiographical. This connection makes research make much more sense, and seem much more meaningful.

Ernest Hemingway develops a very distinctive style in his writing that you will immediately pick up on if you choose him. He developed a “hard boiled” sentence structure, which came from his career as a journalist, and manifested itself in his novels. His writing is short, concise, and may even seem truncated at times. However, this unique style packs a lot of punch, with its ability to say so much in so little. I’m sure you will enjoy reading about the lost World War I generation in Europe, safaris in Africa, and adventures in the sea off the coast of Cuba. I don’t want to spoil Hemingway’s life and works for you. You must research him to experience the full Hemingway experience yourself!

### **Ernest Hemingway by Olivia King**

Ernest Hemingway was certainly a character. During his life, he was a soldier, a father, a fisherman, a hunter, a womanizer, a war correspondent, and, most famously, a writer. Because of the sheer amount of life in his years, there is a lot of biographical information on him. By the end of my note taking process, I found that I actually had too much, and it was hard to determine what to not include, as so much of his work is based on his own life and it is all very interesting even when not entirely relevant.

Hemingway is well known for his straight-forward writing style, which is why I picked him. However, there is plenty of deeper meaning if you look for it, and he presents some very thought provoking points. I read *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *The Sun Also Rises*. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was the hardest for me to read; it was the longest of the three and also attempted to emulate the formalities of the Spanish language by using “thee” and “thou”. Also as a warning, *The Sun Also Rises* has virtually no plot. I found this surprising at first, but it is like that for a reason and most definitely not boring. I would also recommend checking out his short stories in addition, as many critics regard them to be his forte.

All in all, I highly recommend Ernest Hemingway to someone who is looking research an author with an interesting biography, just don’t be put off if he seems to digress from the main plot with seemingly irrelevant information.

### **Ernest Hemingway by Cody Baker**

I was amazed at how easy it was to write about Ernest Hemingway for my senior research. I initially picked him because I knew some information about how he lived an extraordinary life of travel and hunting. I knew that at least it would be easy to write the biography papers with the lifestyle he lived. The novels, I later learned, were easy to read. He focuses mainly on dialogue and there are not many metaphors or hidden meanings to decipher in his works. All of his books

are easily relatable to modern life as well, making the second paper a lot easier. I would recommend Hemingway to any student who does not have any idea of an author they want to learn about, but wants to learn the tale of an extremely interesting man and how he grew as an author.

#### **Ernest Hemingway** by David Sullivan

I'm not going to lie, I chose Hemingway purely for his biography. His novels are generally okay, but I already knew some elements of his exciting biography from another student who had done a presentation (not senior research) on Hemingway before and I decided to commit to him because of this previous knowledge. Hemingway proved to be VERY interesting on the biography front and not so much on the fiction front. You will most likely be less bored with the biography research. Although I actually found myself enjoying *The Old Man and the Sea*, it was hard for me to stomach the lengthiness of *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Sun Also Rises*, and dear God, don't even bother with the four hundred-something page *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. But hey, if that's what you like, go for it. All in all, Hemingway was literally the "most interesting man alive" of the twentieth century and I think his biography and personal character speak far louder through the generations than his somewhat monotone books. Yes, the literary works are important to cover and give very in-depth themes and can be intriguing, but Hemingway as a person is what makes this topic very interesting to study.

#### **John Irving** by Jason Grissino

If you like stories of war and fantasy, and epic journeys full of love and magic.... Don't read John Irving. If you like deep plot lines, highly developed characters and inspirational stories however Irving may be the man for you. I do recommend Irving. I have to warn you though that his stories can be a little graphic at times and they cover a lot of controversial topics such as rape, incest, Sexual assault, drug abuse, abortion, and political issues. John Irving is great altogether. You will not find a shortage of his material or aspects and angles to analyze his literature and writing style from. All in all I say read John Irving. By the way make sure you read *Prayer For Owen Meany*.

#### **John Irving** by Lucas Townsend

John Irving is the best choice you have for authors to research for AP Lit senior research. If you choose the right books, you will be thoroughly entertained and only a little disgusted. He is the most gifted story teller that I have ever had the pleasure of reading, yet he is still a very vulgar writer, including frequent rapes, incestual relationships, murders, and even worse topics. While these topics are present in almost all of his novels, they do not dominate them. His stories bring out the importance of family, friends, and lovers. On the ease of researching him, critical reviews are pieces of cake to find, however, his books are not short (I would suggest reading two or three over the summer) and his themes are not obvious. Despite the length of his novels, they are definitely entertaining and are the best books I have read in my high school career. Irving is definitely a excellent choice for your research, just be prepared.

### **John Irving** by Lauren Fedorchak

John Irving may not be the safest pick for an AP author, but I would definitely recommend considering researching him. His novels are definitely long and hard to read at times, but the stories embedded in his work always has a deeper meaning which is intriguing to learn. It is safe to say that his work never has a dull moment. He's known for his great detail of brutal situations and his gifted storytelling. While I do recommend him, his work does contain a great deal of unpleasant matter such as: sex, rape, incest, murders, sexual assault, abortions... the list goes on. It is very common for Irving's works to have these topics in them, however his underlying hopeful theme in almost all of his books is "life goes on." I enjoyed reading his novels, my personal favorite being *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (definitely read it!!), and also learning about his life and how it affected his work. Finding critics reviews on Irving was never a problem for me and a thesis statement was easily formed from his novels. Overall, my experience researching and studying Irving was completely enriching and at times quite disturbing. If you do choose Irving as your author, BE PREPARED for an interesting, somewhat awkward research paper and senior presentation. Good luck!

### **John Irving** by Jane Grogan

I'll preface this by saying that John Irving is definitely an acquired taste. It is easy to find biography information on John Irving and his works are easy to find criticisms for, if you read his more well-known novels. Irving uses extremely graphic detail, vulgar sex scenes, gruesome tragedies and shocking plot twists to capture his audience in farfetched, yet oddly heartwarming tales. In almost all of Irving's novels he follows a main character from childhood into adulthood and tells their story through their development. This linear way of storytelling is very easy to follow, understand, and analyze. His use of traumatic events like rape, death, divorce, abandonment, incest, suicide, and many others are a way of speaking out against social constructs and ideologies and telling the importance of huge life events. These topics are very easy to formulate a thesis from if you are comfortable with talking about incredibly uncomfortable topics in front of your teacher, peers, and parents.

I personally recommend him as an author, even though I did not fully appreciate his style until after I had done my criticism paper and truly grasped the meaning of his outlandish works. I went into his novels knowing nothing about him, because I didn't know that these helpful recommendations even existed. If you have a strong stomach and enjoy slap stick, satirical humor then Irving is definitely a good choice for you. There are an immeasurable amount of sexual innuendos and jokes referencing male reproductive anatomy that lighten the seriousness

of the novels. Most Irving novels don't have a "happy ending" but they take you through a journey of different emotions and open up your eyes to a lot of serious issues, all while entertaining you.

### **John Irving** by Katie Vesely

If you want to make your senior research experience FUN, then John Irving is the author for you. I swear that I have never laughed harder reading than reading novels by John Irving. He is the funniest man alive (that is if you find crude humor acceptable- some of this humor includes jokes about incest and biting off sex organs). Not only is he funny, but he also writes with such depth. He writes things that have made laugh out loud one moment, t sob the next because of some horrific scene he created. Sometimes reading his novels I cry for the human race because he reveals the under tow in life that we all face, yet he is able to console his readers with humor. Humor is his prescription to survival. But being an AP author, Irving isn't JUST funny. There are SO many possibilities that you could do for your thesis with Irving (and just a hint, it is sometimes better to focus on things other than plot). But all in all, I loved him for the human connections he was able to create through humor that connected everyone on a universal level. He does have deep and interweaving plot lines, and while they can be disturbing, they are never hard to follow. He writes AP worth messages written in a fresh new voice that you don't have to have a dictionary to decipher. BUT, his novels, while easy to get through are lengthy. Do not pick the shorter ones just because they are shorter, the longer ones are his masterpieces. I recommend *The World According to Garp* if you want a book that will stick in your mind forever, and *The Hotel New Hampshire* if you want a book that will make you laugh out loud. Definitely begin reading him over the summer though and I know this sounds crazy, but regardless of who you have, I would just research Irving and look for books that are similar so you can make your thesis making process that much easier.

### **Barbara Kingsolver** by Sam Fortin

Barbara Kingsolver is a very good author. Her writing is interesting and captivates your imagination. She has a very lyrical way of writing that brings the characters to life. All of her stories are character driven and have a political undertone. It is clear that she tries to change people's opinions and open their eyes to the world with her novels. I found that reading her novels changed my understanding on some things and I learned new information. Make sure you look up historical context because she uses and references real historical events. She has themes of accepting differences and injustice. Other themes include family and motherhood. I think girls would like her books more than boys because of her themes of motherhood. I would suggest reading *The Poisonwood Bible* and *The Bean Trees*.

### **Barbara Kingsolver** by Carolina Merrill

Personally, I do not recommend choosing Barbara Kingsolver for your senior presentation. I found that her life just seemed to be plain, simple and quite boring. On one hand, she's different because she is one of the few authors on the list that is still alive, but that worked to my disadvantage. Her life is not complete yet so there was only so much I could write about her biographically. Don't get me wrong, I did enjoy reading some of her books, others were not my favorite though. Her plots tie in a lot of the aspects of nature and community and you will find that they are semi-autobiographical. Make sure you look up a little bit of the historical aspects in each book because it will really help to understand what is going on, especially in *The Poisonwood Bible*. If you do choose Barbara Kingsolver, I suggest reading *The Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven*; they were two of my favorites. And as a suggestion if you choose to read *The Poisonwood Bible*, read it over the summer that way you have more time to read it and understand what it is really talking about.

### **Barbara Kingsolver** by Lucy Scholz

Barbara Kingsolver is an extremely fun author to read. Her books are lively, creative and inspirational and all contain powerful morals and messages. She writes with a very unique and quirky style, making her stories impossible to put down. Unlike many other authors found on the AP reading list, Kingsolver's stories are very modern and address relatively present-day issues, something that I found very easy to connect with and relate to while reading. Also unlike many of the other well-known and accomplished writers on the list, Barbara Kingsolver is still alive today. Her own life is also extremely easy to connect with as a student interested in science and ecology, as well as writing and literature. One of my favorite aspects of researching and reading Kingsolver is how much of her own life she portrays in her novels. It was really neat to see traces of biography and facts that I had looked up and wrote about this writer interwoven into the characters and plots of the novels that I was reading. Literary criticisms were also very easy to find, however they were mainly on her first novel *The Bean Trees* and her most highly acclaimed novel *The Poisonwood Bible*. I would recommend Kingsolver's trilogy, consisting of *The Beans Trees*, *Pigs in Heaven* and *Animals Dreams* as well as *The Poisonwood Bible* for anyone interested in Barbara Kingsolver. If you are someone who does not necessarily like to read very classic, slow moving novels, are interested in biology or science, and enjoy colorful, quirky and creative story telling centered around political injustice, women's rights and taking care of our earth, then I would highly recommend Barbara Kingsolver.

### **Barbara Kingsolver** by Nora Robinson

Barbara Kingsolver is one of my favorite authors, and I would recommend her as an author for senior research. Kingsolver writes about modern issues that are prevalent in today's society. The reader can really relate to the ecological and political issues she presents in her writing. She is still alive which can be negative and positive since there may not be as much information on her

life as other authors have. Her novels are very easy to read and her writing style is very modern. The characters in her books are very likeable, and as a reader I found myself captivated in her writing. I read *The Poisonwood Bible*, *Animal Dreams* and *Flight Behavior*. I found it very easy to relate my three books to a common theme involving the clashing of cultures. I really did enjoy Barbara Kingsolver as my author and I think she is a very interesting woman who has a lot to share about her ideas on society and the world.

### **Barbara Kingsolver** by Grace Horgan

I would definitely recommend Kingsolver for your senior research presentation. She lived a very interesting life and she incorporates her personal experiences into her novels. I read *The Bean Trees*, *Pigs in Heaven*, and *The Poisonwood Bible* for my research. Her novels are those books that when you start reading you just don't want to stop. However, the one downside to doing Kingsolver as an AP research author is that it was difficult in the beginning to find some biography information on her. However, it was definitely worth the extra time in researching and digging deeper into her life and seeing how she connected her childhood and experiences to her novels. Her novels are fun, friendly, and serious all at the same time which makes it so interesting to read them. Overall, I would definitely recommend Barbara Kingsolver as your AP Lit author!

### **Cormac McCarthy** by Logan Piercy

To any and all future seniors taking Advanced Placement Literature, I strongly advise you to consider choosing Cormac McCarthy as your author choice for the Senior Research Project. His novels are extremely rewarding and are filled with beautiful language and interesting characters. There are plenty of criticisms to be found on his works, with most of them being very in-depth and helpful in understanding some of the big themes at work in his novels. *The Road* is personally one of my favorite novels, but his other works are just as interesting and immersive. That said, there are a few things you should know about him. He is not an easy read; sometimes the descriptions he puts in are very difficult to follow and distract you from the plot. His works are ALL very depressing, so be prepared to want to live in darkness for the rest of your life. If you do decide to pick Cormac McCarthy as your author, good luck! Have fun! And don't forget to get a prescription of Prozac!

### **Cormac McCarthy** by Carter Snay

Doing my senior research on Cormac McCarthy harder than I thought it would be. I thought it would be easy because I knew I enjoyed his writing style, but I was wrong. While I did enjoy reading his books, there was hardly anything known about his life. That made the biography a little more challenging. I still got it done, but there was so little known about his life, that it was not as easy as I had hoped. Or at least not as easy as some other authors. If you enjoy reading

Cormac McCarthy, or have seen the movie *No Country for Old Men*, or just want to start reading his stuff, I still recommend my author. Just know, the biography is gonna be a lot of stretching for pages, and hoping you can reach the page minimum.

### **Ian McEwan** by Taylor Platt

I highly recommend Ian McEwan as an author. His novels are very fast paced and are easy to read. McEwan is a modern author and he often includes very unique topics in his writing which make his novels extremely interesting. However, his work is often very dark and features somewhat bizarre events. Some novels feature death and gore and he is extremely descriptive in these events. I would not recommend his work for the faint at heart or those who are bothered by gruesome descriptions for this reason. Although he is a bit morbid in some novels, McEwan's work includes a wide range of themes and topics. Ian McEwan's work is not only unique from other modern authors, but each of his novels is unique to each other in the topics they include. I found Ian McEwan to be a fascinating author and even though many of the topics he writes about are out of the ordinary, they are very interesting to read about. I also found it easy to find literary criticisms on his work. McEwan is seen as a controversial author because of the topics he writes about and there was not only criticism on this, but on his many novels as well. Ian McEwan is an excellent author for anyone who enjoys modern novels that include action, suspense, and many twists and turns concerning the every day events of the seemingly normal lives of the characters in his novels.

### **Ian McEwan** by Abby Connolly

McEwan is a novelist I would recommend to future students. His novels were all page turners filled with suspense. McEwan's novels were also all very quick reads, some of which I even finished in a day. However, the topics covered in McEwan's novels are interesting to say the least. McEwan has written many works covering many different topics including love, children, and history. His novels can get dark and disturbing at times including sex and murder. I read the novels *The Comfort of Strangers*, *On Chesil Beach*, and *Atonement*. Each of these novels were enjoyable but some do get descriptive with different events such as rape. The one issue I faced with McEwan was finding criticisms for some of his work. *The Comfort of Strangers* was one in particular I couldn't find much on, however in the end I made it work and still recommend the novel. I highly suggest Ian McEwan to anyone looking for a modern day author who writes about fascinating topics that can keep you quickly turning pages the entire time you read.

### **Ian McEwan** by Nick Fortuna



McEwan is without a doubt is an exemplary author and should remain an author used in the *Advanced Placement Literature* class. His writing is very unique and sets himself aside from all others with his wide variety of storylines. Some of his works are short and broad, while others are long and very in-depth giving the reader a different feel for each of his works. His novels, based on the ones that I have read (*Atonement*, *The Innocent*, *The Comfort of Strangers*, and *Black Dogs*), all seem to contain common themes such as an unusual sexual or loving relation between characters, murderous crimes, and also historically significant events that make all of his novels a page turner. His works are easy to understand and also enjoyable even though at times they can get a little uncomfortable. Overall, Ian McEwan has written some very timely novels and is still writing today. His works, although can be strange at times, are still able to be related to readers and they teach very valuable lessons. They give the reader a second outlook on life and makes the reader into a better person.

#### **Arthur Miller** by Meagan LaMontagne

I would recommend Arthur Miller as an author to anyone who enjoys short plays. His plays are light and are a relatively easy reading level. Death of a Salesman, All My Sons, and The Crucible are all good recommendations for the literary analysis portion of senior research. The plays are short and include thorough characterization. The setting is generally underdeveloped and the plots are never overly active. What Miller is best at is theme development. His plays are definitely not for those who enjoy an action or suspense novel. However, he makes up for lack of action with the rich social critique included in his works. Miller's own personal experiences play a huge role in the commentary on society that shines through in his plays. The biographical portion of the research project was especially interesting because of Miller's activism in political and social affairs.

#### **Arthur Miller** by Amy Snyder

I highly recommend doing the Great American playwright, Arthur Miller, for your AP Lit Senior Research. First of all, since he is a playwright, his plays are short and easy to get through. It does not take a long time to read them. It is nice because if you are running behind on reading you'll be able to read them quickly in order to catch up. Also, I recommend Miller because he is an excellent writer that is able to capture emotion and tension so exquisitely on the page and on the stage. A common thread between the plays you read is easy to find because he uses similar themes in all of his plays. He also uses similar characters and character relationships. The connection between Miller and his works is undeniable. He wrote about life, and it is so easy to feel and experience what he depicts in his plays. I loved researching his life and seeing how it connected to his works. I enjoyed reading Arthur Miller's plays, and his play, *All My Sons*, has become my favorite play. Since I love theatre, it was also great to be able to tap into that passion in my research, but even if you don't love theatre, he is still a great author to do. If you asked me if I would research Arthur Miller again, I would DEFINETLY say yes.

### **Toni Morrison** by Miranda Triano

I think that Toni Morrison is a great author to keep on the list for the AP Literature senior research authors. When I was originally going through the list, I have to admit that Toni Morrison was definitely not my first choice. I had read a book of hers over the summer and I really enjoyed it, so when my first choice was taken, I resorted to Toni Morrison and I am extremely glad I did so. After reading three of her books, I had a strong understanding of her values. Many people would assume that the research portion of the assignment would be boring, but that was probably my favorite part. I loved learning the history and culture that went into the making of Morrison's novels. I would highly recommend Toni Morrison to anyone who enjoys learning about rich African American culture. She is also a great author for students who enjoy reading about powerful and independent women!

### **Toni Morrison** by Aisha Elfiki

I highly recommend Toni Morrison for senior research. Her works are, in my opinion, consistently interesting and easy to understand. Her books brought light to the problems of the early 1900s while remaining thought provoking. Her life was interesting and easy to write on. There was no lack of information on any part of her life and there seemed to be a biography of her on every website. I read *A Mercy*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Sula*. While I enjoyed all the books, *The Bluest Eye* was my favorite. I read the entire book in one day because I couldn't put it down. When it came to finding criticisms I struggled to find any on *A Mercy*. This was a major problem because it made it hard to incorporate it into my essay. But Morrison's unique writing style and use of African American characters to portray theme is certainly a very interesting topic to explore and it helped make my senior research much more bearable. She creates a sense of empowerment for both African Americans and women alike, which was an absolute pleasure to read. I would recommend this author to anyone who wants easily understandable books that are impeccably written and that force the reader to get very emotionally involved.

### **Toni Morrison** by Reina Cracknell

If you are interested in a female author who discusses very mature topics regarding rape, racism, and abuse then you will not be disappointed. In my opinion Toni Morrison a great author to choose for the senior research project. Her novels, though mature in content, are very easy to understand. There is a lot of information available about Toni's life and it is relatively easy to find literary criticisms on her works. The novel *The Bluest Eye* was my favorite of the three that I read. It also had the most information about it. The other novels I read, *Jazz* and *A Mercy*, were also great books but they had less information on them. Due to the simplistic language and interesting plots, all of these novels were extremely quick reads because it was hard to put them down. I think Morrison's books tend to be more geared towards females and females are able to relate to the stories. Toni Morrison truly was a great author who really put passion and emotion into all of her works.

### **Toni Morrison** by Sydney Sunnerberg

I believe that Toni Morrison is a great author to choose for senior research, and would highly recommend her. Her books are not long, and, although they discuss tough and mature topics, they are easy to read and understand. There is a lot of biographical information about her, which was very helpful when writing the biography part of the essay. I read *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *A Mercy*. I was able to find plenty of criticism on the first two books, but it was hard to find criticism on *A Mercy*. Although it is a great novel, I recommend not choosing *A Mercy* as one of the three. *The Bluest Eye* was the novel that made me want to research Morrison because she presents serious topics, such as racism and abuse, within a creative and interesting novel that I couldn't put down. Her novels illustrate the importance of being an individual and that concept really kept my interest. In my opinion, she is a great author that expresses her opinions through strong emotions, and is for people who like reading about strong female characters that embody these opinions and emotions.

### **Toni Morrison**—Megan Reid

I really liked doing my senior research on Toni Morrison. It was super easy to find biographical information on her and her books were not long and were really easy to read. I read *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Home* over the summer, but I decided to not include *Home* in my research paper because it was hard to find criticisms on it because of how recently it was published. Instead, I read *Jazz*. One thing you need to be aware of if you are planning on choosing Toni Morrison is that she presents a lot of mature topics, such as racism and abuse, that can be hard to read at times. But overall, I believe that Toni Morrison is a great AP author and I am really glad I was able to do my senior research on her.

### **Toni Morrison**- Sophia Uhlarik

I chose to do my senior research on Toni Morrison and in the end I was pleased with my decision. The novels I read were *The Bluest Eye*, *Home*, and *Beloved*. *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* are two of Morrison's most famous and well-known novels so it was easy to find criticism on both of them. *Home*, was more difficult to find criticism on because it is one of Morrison's newest novels. Learning about Morrison's life was really interesting because of the connections I could make between her life and things that occurred in her novels. I highly recommend Toni Morrison as an author to conduct your senior research on, if I could do it over again I would not change a thing!

### **Joyce Carol Oates** by Abbi Bennett.

**I most definitely suggest her to any future AP Lit students.** I found her novels to be extremely interesting, and always suspenseful. If you enjoy mysteries, and are not afraid of some graphic and detailed descriptions, then Oates is a perfect choice for you. One suggestion that I would make is that you make sure to read some of her more popular novels. I read *Daddy Love*, *Black Water*, and *The Little Bird of Heaven*. Throughout my research I found it somewhat difficult to find useful criticism reviews on these novels. Some of her more popular novels that I did find information on through my searching were *Blonde*, and *The Gravedigger's Daughter*. Even though these two novels are a little bit lengthy they are definitely worth reading. You will never be short of information with these two novels. Another important aspect of this project was finding a common thread. I would it very easy to find something that was relevant through all of her novels. She is an amazing author, and she is worth looking into. Although some of her topics may be too gruesome for some, such as rape, sexual abuse, and deaths, she has a way of intriguing you. When first reading my first novel I was a little thrown back by this aspect, but somehow I stayed interested. I would definitely suggest Joyce Carol Oates to anyone who is interested in doing her for an AP author.

#### **Joyce Carol Oates by Taylor Brown**

I highly recommend the author Joyce Carol Oates to any future AP Literature student. I really enjoyed reading her descriptive novels. A great quality about Oates' writing style is that she writes with a distinct personal quality within the major characters in her novels. This captures the reader's full attention so that they feel like they could know the characters in real life. If you are a person who enjoys reading very expressive novels filled with deep description about characters' lives, then Oates is a perfect author for you. One thing I did find difficult when reading is how extensively Joyce goes into the lives of her characters. You are with the main characters from the starting point in their lives to the end of their lives. This is a hindrance since there is a lot to read, but it is also a blessing since it *is* so descriptive and you find yourself getting fully acquainted with very lifelike characters. The lives of the characters in her novels are so relatable it makes the stories worthwhile. Common occurrences in her novels include dark imagery, family life, and violence against women. She is a graphic novelist that creates realistic happenings that could happen today. While trying to find criticism for Oates I had some issues. I had read more recent novels from the AHS library like The Gravekeeper's Daughter, Fair Maiden, and We Were the Mulvaney's and most of the criticism I could find was on earlier written novels. Even though all of the novels I read were pretty easy to read, it was difficult to find criticism about them since they were more recent. I strongly suggest you read some of her more well-known novels that were written earlier in her career. Those earlier novels surely will have a higher likelihood of more criticism on them. The type of reader that will enjoy Joyce Carol Oates is a person who enjoys depictive stories that you find yourself getting lost in. In closing, I want assure you that Joyce Carol Oates is an excellent author to do Senior Research on.

#### **Joyce Carol Oates by Valerie Meskie**

For my senior presentation, I studied Joyce Carol Oates, and three of her books. It was semi-difficult to find biographies on her in the school's library, but I found that the public library, as well as the internet, helped me enormously. If you decide to do your research on her, make sure that you look for information on her in more than a few places, because sometimes there are conflicting elements and many things left out in sources. Besides this, if you were looking for an author with an exceedingly interesting life, then do not pick Oates.

The three books that I read were A Fair Maiden, Rape: A Love Story, and Black Water. I found all of these books to be very interesting, and there was never a dull moment in any of them. However, these books are not for the faint of heart. Unless you are willing to read about constant misfortunes and explicit rape scenes, I suggest you read other books. A Fair Maiden and Rape: A Love Story had a small amount of criticisms available, but it was almost impossible to find criticisms for Black Water. Although I recommend reading Joyce Carol Oates as your author, I would say that you should read more popular books, such as Little Bird of Heaven.

#### **Eugene O'Neill by Alison Pelletier**

If you are looking for an author with an interesting biography, Eugene O'Neill is definitely one to consider. He comes from a very tragic and graphic past, but it was extremely entertaining to read about. His plays were extremely short and easy to read, but filled with plenty of action and interesting plot lines. They contain easy language, and were very easy to analyze. I went into this project blind, never having heard of Eugene O'Neill, but came out very happy that I had chosen him. I dreaded this project from the moment I entered high school because of my horrible stage fright, and I was able to present easily for over twenty minutes. Learning about him kept me extremely entertained, and I recommend him for anyone interested in somewhat dark plots and an extremely eventful biography.

#### **Eugene O'Neill by Merissa Andersen**

Eugene O'Neill was quite an interesting man to spend three months of my life with, his life story horrifying, entertaining, and slightly sickening. All of these qualities made for quite interesting biographical research. I enjoyed learning about his twisted life and its effects on his personality and literature. When it came time to actually read his literature, I was not quite as enthralled. O'Neill was a playwright. I did enjoy some parts of his work, but they were written in such strong colloquial diction that it was hard to decipher the true meaning of what he was saying. I enjoyed the first book I read, *Desire Under the Elms*, most of all. It was the one book that I could actually take away meaning of both plot and theme. O'Neill books are very hard to come across. I ended up having to buy one of them off Amazon.com and the other two I printed out from an online collection of O'Neill drama. The books *Bound East for Cardiff* and *Anna Christie* were not interesting to me at all, mostly due to the fact they were about men living at sea dealing with

the tribulations of loneliness. As the female high school senior living in suburbia, I could not relate. To be brutally honest, the best part about choosing O'Neill was that his plays were not very lengthy at all, but they did have a lot to them, which made critical analysis easy. It was not difficult to find literary criticisms on his works, except for *Bound East for Cardiff*. I strongly recommend not reading his earlier works, due to the fact there is no information on them. Overall, I am not disappointed in my choice to study Eugene O'Neill. I came away learning a plethora of information about someone I never even knew existed.

#### **George Orwell** by Austen Wigglesworth

George Orwell had a moderately interesting life, and his two most well-known works, Animal Farm and 1984 are good novels, straight-forward and well-written. The problem with doing the project on Orwell is finding the third book to read. The other books he wrote are either dry, political non-fiction, or obscure novels, and there is little to no criticism on his other pieces. Although, the third novel I read, A Clergyman's Daughter, was not necessarily bad, and there was some criticism, I would not recommend doing the project on Orwell, unless you are particularly interested in politics. However, I would recommend reading 1984, because it is a really well-done piece of satire, has a good story, and is culturally significant.

#### **George Orwell** by Aurora White

While I would recommend Orwell for his interesting outlook on society, easy to follow stories, and understandable word choice, I have to say that he was a relatively difficult author to research. He only has two popular novels, *1984* and *Animal Farm*, so it's hard not only to simply find another novel of his to read, but to connect it through a thesis to the previous two. His biography is also vague, especially his early life. While we know that he was politically radical, we don't know much about his personal life or hobbies, other than reading and writing. Despite this lack of information, if you can manage to find enough info on his life and works to write a paper, he is a very lovable author! I found it was easy for me to get sucked into the worlds he created and feel as if I were living it with the characters. If you enjoy reading about futuristic, satirical dystopias, Orwell is your author!

#### **George Orwell** by Emily Desrocher

I loved doing my senior research and learning about George Orwell. As a history buff, I really enjoyed delving deeper into this time period (Anti-Communist/Cold War) and learning more about it. If you enjoy learning about history or politics I would recommend George Orwell. Two of George Orwell's most famous books include Animal Farm and 1984. A problem I encountered was finding a third book to read. I ended up reading Homage To Catalonia as my third book which ended up being a great choice because it was autobiographical information about the origins of his Anti-Communist values. Orwell's books are satirical and extremely interesting.

#### **George Orwell** by Alissa Smith

Undeniably, George Orwell is a fantastic author who has been studied for decades. I truly enjoyed researching and reading his novels for this project, however, I came across some roadblocks in the process. Since Orwell is primarily considered a “political” writer, it made it challenging for me to choose a thesis that focused more on Orwell’s opinion of society’s social issues. There is no trouble in finding criticisms for *Animal Farm* and *1984*, but depending on what novel you choose for your third read, you may run into some issues. My suggestion would be to choose a solid thesis beforehand, and research which of his books fits best for your final read. Your step following that would be to ensure you have access to enough criticisms on this novel to back up your claim. Overall, I would say Orwell is one of the most interesting authors I have ever read- 100% worth the read (and the work).

### **Sam Shepard** by Aspen Gibbas

I chose Sam Shepard after having read some of his short stories and two of his plays over the summer before my senior year. I picked his name off the list somewhat randomly and I had almost no prior knowledge about him. My main reason for choosing him was that he was a playwright, and if you know me at all, you know that I am quite the theatre enthusiast. Anyway, I highly recommend Sam Shepard as a candidate for your senior research.

First of all, he has a really cool life – he was basically an overnight success off-Broadway, and he’s a movie star on the side. Also he’s one of the few AP authors that is STILL ALIVE. Secondly, his plays are short, enjoyable, and relatively easy to read. They are bizarre, dark comedies filled with symbolism and imagery that always reveal a deeper meaning, usually commenting on some aspect of American life. They are set in the modern day, written in modern, colloquial language, and many of them take place in western settings. You might not understand a play fully until you really think about it for a little while, but then it will all make sense. I enjoyed all of the Shepard plays that I read, however *True West* was my least favorite because I found it to be weaker in comparison to his other works and I do not recommend it. I do recommend *The Curse of the Starving Class*, *Buried Child*, and *Simpatico*. When I was coming up with my thesis I found that I had multiple options, because there is a lot that can be analyzed and studied in his works. As far as criticisms go there are plenty available online and through the Literary Criticisms collection in the AHS library. Shepard has a lot of plays on a lot of different subjects. I chose to focus mainly on his “family dramas” as a means of narrowing down my thesis but you can really do anything you want because there is so much available to you. Shepard is a very versatile and interesting author. I wish you all the best if you choose to study him for your senior research project this year!

### **John Steinbeck** by Curran O'Connor

I really did enjoy studying and researching John Steinbeck and his pieces of literature. His historical fiction novels create a realistic idea and image in your head. His life was interesting in the way he went about researching for the content of his novels and how he lived his life. The *Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *Cannery Row* were all great stories and were relatively easy to read. If you want to do your project on a great American author who portrayed the struggles of the hardworking laborers of the time period, I 100% recommend John Steinbeck. The advice I would give is to do your deadlines earlier because it is harder to do the day before, so I've heard.

### **John Steinbeck** by Ali Debasitis

John Steinbeck was a wonderful author to spend three months with. His works are very interesting to read, and it's easy to see why he was such a well-acclaimed author. I chose to read *The Pearl*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*, all of which I found to be intriguing and thought provoking. His works are not hard to comprehend, however there are many underlying themes that can be explored in depth for analysis. Finding literary criticisms was not necessarily hard, but make sure your thesis can be supported by criticisms that might not completely match it. Meaning, some literary criticisms might not seem to be about your thesis, but they can still support it so don't give up! Steinbeck is truly one of America's greatest authors, and in reading his works you will learn not only about the stories he creates but also about American history in a dynamic way. In some of his novels, Steinbeck uses a unique writing style, but it doesn't impede understanding. In fact, I'd say it adds more profundity to the writing and can give the reader a more emotional understanding or connection to the book. Steinbeck's life was well documented and had enough surprises to make the biography section neither boring nor stagnant. Steinbeck is one of my favorite authors, and doing my senior research project on him only strengthened that opinion. I would wholeheartedly recommend John Steinbeck: you will read some amazing American masterpieces!

### **John Steinbeck** by Phoebe Winders

If you're interested in reading historical fiction, then John Steinbeck is the author for you. I thoroughly enjoyed researching Steinbeck for the first half of senior year. His novels are fairly easy to read and it was not difficult finding criticism for the three novels I focused on, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Cannery Row*. I do not recommend reading *The Pearl*. Though it is pleasantly short and understandable, its themes are difficult to connect to Steinbeck's other novels. Additionally, there is hardly any criticism on it. His biography is interesting enough, and his depiction of the American people is spot on. He is such an inspiring author and I highly recommend him for senior research. One other thing to remember is that senior research does not have to be difficult. If you meet the deadlines and do your work to the fullest, it is fairly easy and very rewarding. Good luck!



### **Amy Tan** by Katy O'Neill

Amy Tan's novels have themes regarding bicultural tensions and struggles between mothers and daughters. Many of her stories are told with multiple perspectives. It seemed that her stories were all very similar in structure, theme, and general message. However each one had a different twist in the plot. I read The Joy Luck Club, The Bonesetter's Daughter, and The Kitchen God's Wife. I enjoyed reading her novels because I thought it was interesting to learn about the lives of women from China. Overall, I recommend Amy Tan for your senior research project. Her life was interesting and reflective in her stories.

### **Amy Tan** by Autumn Kligerman

I would absolutely recommend Amy Tan for senior research. In my opinion, her life has been very interesting and that is clearly shown in her novels. Since she started writing fairly recently, (especially taking the other authors into consideration) her novels are very easy to read and kept my attention the whole time. Not only this, but I was also able to relate very well to her younger characters because she often writes about the challenges mothers and daughters face and the difficulty of that particular relationship. While reading the books I did my journals on, it didn't feel like I was doing schoolwork, but rather reading for enjoyment. This, I think, helped me retain more information which made journaling a breeze. When looking up the information I needed for my papers, I found out so much about her life that surprised me and made for great talking points when actually giving my presentation. I'm glad it's done now, but choosing such a great author made the entire process much easier and a little more enjoyable.

No matter who you end up choosing, don't stress. Get your deadlines in on time, do everything to the best of your ability, and you'll do fine. It is not as difficult or nerve-wracking as you may have been told. Good luck!

### **Amy Tan** by April Bruno

I highly recommend choosing the author Amy Tan for senior research. Her novels are all very similar, focusing on the adventures and relationships between bicultural mothers and daughters. This author is still alive, but finding information on her biography was not hard at all. Her life experiences living as an Americanized Chinese daughter are shown within all of her books in different ways, which makes reading her novels and researching about her life very interesting. I read *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *The Hundred Secret Senses* and I loved reading each one. Her novels are very easy and enjoyable to read and they are all very similar, which makes it very easy to find a common theme. I really enjoyed having Amy Tan as an author because it was very interesting to learn about Chinese cultures and I really like her style of writing and the emotional storytelling within each novel.

### **Amy Tan** by Colleen Noonan

I highly recommend choosing Amy Tan as your author for anyone entering AP Lit. Her works make insightful and relevant commentary on parent-child relationships that make the books accessible to teens. I read her novels *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, and *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and it was easy to find not one, but multiple common links between the books. Throughout her works, Tan repeats many of the same themes, focusing on the topics of cultural assimilation, family, and identity. Additionally, Tan uses similar structure and diction throughout each of her novels. I was able to find biographical information on Tan and literary criticisms for Tan's books with just as much ease as I was able to find connections between Tan's stories. Learning about Tan's life was arguably one of the most interesting parts of my research, as I was able to see many parallels between her biography and her books. The ease with which research can be done on Tan aside, Tan's novels are really enjoyable, offering a look into both the beauty and complications of Chinese culture in such a way that although the stories are not "action-packed" the reader is kept captivated.

### **J.R.R. Tolkien** by Hannah Schalk:

J.R.R. Tolkien is one of my favorite authors, and I personally loved spending three months studying him for senior research. His life is just as fascinating as his stories, and learning about how he put all his different experiences into Middle Earth made it even better. If you like mythology, language, or even just enjoyed the movies, then Tolkien's works would be an excellent choice. He's an author who spent his life creating an entire world, and there are so many different directions you can go with for an analysis. The biggest challenge I faced was narrowing my thoughts down to a single thesis. I would recommend reading other books in addition to *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (ex: *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, *The Unfinished Tales*) to incorporate into your research because they provide a wider background to Middle Earth, even if *The Silmarillion* and *The Unfinished Tales* are a long, dry read. Personally, I didn't finish either of them and just used them as references on top of the more interesting stories. Do not choose Tolkien if you are not a fan of strange names and small font. For a presentation, the movies made it easy to have a lot of fun. I incorporated movie clips, music, and props into mine. Make it creative because there is *so much* you can do with Tolkien. Also, don't just watch the movies. At points they differ from the books, and Tolkien's writing is a lot of fun to read!

### **J.R.R. Tolkien** by Zach Martin

I highly recommend J.R.R. Tolkien for anyone participating in the AP Senior Research project next year. His intriguing life and incredible literature helped me to enjoy the project rather than dread it. As a person, Tolkien has a life story that contains sadness, laughs, and triumphs with huge success being the result. I guarantee that nearly everyone in the class has read/watched/heard of The Lord of the Rings trilogy, and being able to delve into deeper understanding of the books and the man behind them offers both learning and interest. For example, I thought it was awesome that Tolkien based his stories not upon characters or areas, but the languages that he himself invented. Those who enjoy stories filled with imagery would also greatly enjoy Tolkien's works. The detail he weaves so intricately into every scene and

description makes one feel as part of his imaginary world. Along with this utter description comes nearly constant action and conflict, and the overall theme of good triumphing over evil is timeless. In short, I count myself privileged to have been able to enter into the amazing Middle Earth engineered entirely by this quiet Oxford professor, and I am sure that a student from next year's class will feel the same way if they give him a chance.

### **JRR Tolkien-** Maddie Severance

If you have seen any of Peter Jackson's renditions of Tolkien's books, then you probably think that choosing Tolkien as your author will be an adventure. If that is your opinion, then you are 100% correct. I chose Tolkien solely based on the fact that I love the movie trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. Although that was my only reason, choosing Tolkien worked out really well for me personally. Many of the other authors on the list are depressing. Their lives are sad and their books are even more upsetting. Tolkien had a very happy life with a lovely marriage and none of his books make you want to cry. His books are intriguing and mystical. I personally read *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, and *The Silmarillion*. *The Hobbit* was the easiest and the most fun to read because it is basically a children's book. My other two choices were much more challenging to read. They are longer and are more adult regarding the language and difficulty of reading. I do suggest reading these three books if you choose Tolkien because they are the same in that they are all set in Middle Earth but they are different in actual content and plotline. I do suggest reading them in a different order however. I would suggest reading *The Silmarillion* first, followed by *The Hobbit* and whatever *Lord of the Rings* novel you decide to read. My only other suggestion if you choose Tolkien is to allot enough time for reading the more difficult books or you could potentially miss a great deal of helpful information for your paper. It is unbelievably easy to develop a thesis based on Tolkien's works. I am pretty sure a potato could recognize Tolkien's message in each of his books. In my presentation, I was also able to include the movie trailer for *The Hobbit*. This not only helped me convey my thesis, but also made my presentation more enjoyable for the audience. Anyone who enjoys mythology, adventure, and extremely well-written books should definitely consider choosing Tolkien for senior research.

### **JRR Tolkien-**by Collum Holmes

Tolkien was a great author to work with for senior research. Since he is still such a popular author today, there is an abundance of information on him and his background. However, all of his writing is very lengthy and you simply will not have the time to slack off if you choose him. Additionally, his writing is very two sided; there are the wildly popular books which EVERYBODY chooses such as the *Hobbit* or the *Lord of the Rings*, which happen to have a near-limitless amount of reviews and opinions on them, and there are books nobody has heard of, making literary criticisms nearly impossible to find. In that sense, once you have chosen Tolkien as your author you have to make yet another choice of whether to do the same books as people would expect to be done, or to do exotic yet interesting stories that will be hard to research.

Other than that though, his biography was easy to write and, unlike the majority of the other authors listed, involves few depressing events. I'd recommend him as an author though.

### **JRR Tolkien** by Kaylee Porter

If you aren't amazing at time management, then stop reading right here and don't even attempt to study Tolkien for senior research. Tolkien's works are no less than 300 pages each, longer than most books by any other AP author. You can't procrastinate reading, especially when you have to write journals and actually pay attention to what you're reading. This was the biggest struggle of all for me, and I lost a lot of sleep trying to read three incredibly long, detailed books in a short amount of time.

I can't imagine how different this research would have been for me had I not been interested in Tolkien and familiar with his universe beforehand. Tolkien is the kind of author that you could complete an entire college course on and still have only scratched the surface. I had a general idea of what I wanted to do and was very familiar with the basics of Tolkien, and this helped me immensely in the long run. Tolkien is not the kind of author you can do "just for fun" if you actually want to learn something meaningful. You really need to devote yourself to him.

In hindsight, I'm so glad that I chose Tolkien because he really was a challenging author, and I had to push myself and think way outside of the box when studying him. His personal life and environment tie in with his works immensely, and you have to be able to take a step back and see this; it isn't always going to be black and white. He was revolutionary in the world of English and science-fiction/fantasy literature, and is really worth looking into if you genuinely are interested.

### **JRR Tolkien** by Gabe Turbide

Tolkien is an author I would definitely recommend for this project. He has a very expansive background and accomplished more than enough during his life to be able to easily meet the five to seven page requirement for the biography. Also his writings are fantastic and *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy are personally my favorite books. As far as choosing which books to read I would definitely say read the trilogy, not *The Hobbit*. This is because you get a more complete look at the story instead of stopping with *The Two Towers* and *The Hobbit* was originally geared towards children so the exploration of its themes are not as in depth. It helps immensely if you can decide on a thesis very early on since the story is intertwined unlike most of the authors. Also when doing Tolkien keep in mind that for the power point at the end you can only use one of the books, so as you read your and write your essay try and figure out which book contains the best information to support your thesis and if any of the novels has a specific passage that would be best for your thesis, the selection of a passage played a huge part in which book I chose to focus on. Overall Tolkien is a good author to use, but you need to organize yourself earlier on in the process of reading than you might with other authors since you will be focusing on only one large story instead of three different stories.

### **J.R.R. Tolkien-** As reviewed by Evan Woodsom

J.R.R. Tolkien was an extremely interesting author to read and research, as there are no authors like him. His created world is extremely thorough- almost impossibly so. He has a lot of biography, from a difficult childhood complete with losing his parents, and growing up in foster care, to a very academically dedicated later life. Finding a common thread between his books was fairly easy due to the large number of angles from which you could approach it. His books were not a chore to read which is of course a definite plus. I would recommend conducting research on J.R.R. Tolkien if you love, like, moderately enjoy, or can mildly tolerate fantasy novels. His works are so unique and captivating that reading hardly feels like homework, and before you know it, you'll be done with research, and senior year. Good luck, and I hope this helped!

### **Mark Twain** by Dan Sanderson

Alright so Twain was alright. He had his good days and his bad, mostly bad though. In my opinion all of his books at least the ones I read: Huckleberry Finn, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court and The prince & the Pauper, were really boring. I had no real interest in them. Connecticut Yankee was the best one though I thought. On the bright side Huckleberry Finn is read in sophomore year so it's not hard to do again, or rather it's easier to understand. Also Twain has a ton of information on him. There are two whole volumes of literary criticism and you could do the whole project just with those. He has an autobiography and many more books on him along with his own section in the reference center. However this doesn't make up for the fact that I don't think his life was nearly as interesting as other authors on the AP Lit author list. Twain didn't do much he didn't have any scandalous vices or traumatic childhood that makes for a good story. All Twain had was riding down the Mississippi in a steamboat.

### **Mark Twain** by Jack Ashton

I found Twain to be a pretty good author overall. His books were not that exciting but *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* were good adventures of boyhood. *The Prince and the Pauper* had some good adventures in it and taught many good lessons. As far as information and criticism, there are many books on Twain and finding information to fill your papers is not hard. In his life he did not do anything too crazy, but he did have a few adventures like traveling the country by many means of transportation, including the steamboats he piloted. Reading about Huckleberry Finn sophomore year gives you a pretty good representation of what both Twain and his books will be like. If you did not enjoy that book he is not the right author for you. Overall I personally found Twain a good author to choose for my senior research project.

### **Mark Twain** – Josh Eby

In my opinion, Mark Twain is one of the most worthwhile authors to do your senior research on. I read *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* and enjoyed each thoroughly. What makes Twain such a great author in my opinion is that he is able to entwine his social commentaries on Southern society in timeless tales like *Huck Finn* that are great stories in and of themselves. The fact that he's able to give these stories a true purpose is what puts him in the upper echelon of American writers. It was fairly easy to find criticisms on each of the works I read, but I might recommend reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in place of *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* because I had to stretch those criticisms pretty thin to fit them into my paper. As far as the biography portion goes, I will put it bluntly: Twain is dead, so there is plenty of info out there for you. His life might not have been the most interesting, but you can write a 5-7 page paper on it and that's all that matters.

### **Mark Twain** by Chris Cioffi

First and foremost, Mark Twain is not for everyone. If you thought *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was dry and boring, Twain is not the author for you. If you found humor and comical parts along with a stingy social criticism, he may be a strong candidate for your research paper. As for accessibility, Twain's life is very well documented. While maybe not as interesting as some of the other authors, Twain has a ton of information, and he does have his interesting points such as being asked to run for president and his numerous quarrels in the Western portion of the United States. Additionally, his novels have a ton of criticism due to their endurance and Twain's legacy. One issue I had was picking a third book. I read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and *The Prince and the Pauper*. While the first two had a lot of common themes such as boyhood, innocence, and a sense of corruption among authority figures, I had to stretch my arguments on *The Prince and the Pauper*. Overall, I found it humorous and fun to read one of America's most renowned authors. While there were some minor issues with drafting my papers, the overall experience was a rewarding one.

### **John Updike** by Marissa Randall

I believe that John Updike is a great choice of an author to study and an author that gives the student leeway when researching his life and his works. The novels I read were *The Witches of Eastwick*, *The Widows of Eastwick*, and *Rabbit, Run*. I enjoyed all three novels, but would recommend any upcoming student who decides to research Updike to reconsider when choosing *The Widows of Eastwick*. I found it very difficult to find criticisms on this work. His tetralogy of four novels starting with *Rabbit, Run*, *Rabbit Redux*, *Rabbit is Rich*, and *Rabbit at Rest* is also a great selection of novels. *Rabbit, Run*, out of the three novels I read, was the one I enjoyed the most and would highly recommend. The wide selection of works that Updike produced makes him a great choice for senior research.

### **Kurt Vonnegut** by Erica Marx

I recommend Kurt Vonnegut to any senior who is fascinated by social commentary, peculiar characters, and dark humor. Vonnegut really has a specific voice that is interesting and entertaining. Although some points can be inappropriate, they allow the reader to open their eyes to situations surrounding them. If you cannot handle subjects such as war, sex, and vulgar language, Vonnegut's novels are not for you. The best way I can describe the characters are caricatures. The characters are so outrageous and strange that there is no way they can be real. This just adds more humor to his novels and works of literature. The dark humor is also a portion of Vonnegut's style and voice. Situations he pokes fun at are not humorous but the way he describes people, events, and objects lets the reader laugh at themselves and the world they live in. I feel as if male students may enjoy his books better, but as a female, I did like his stories and really did open my mind up. The novels I read were Breakfast of Champions (my favorite), Slaughterhouse Five, and Cat's Cradle.

### **Kurt Vonnegut** by Dylan Masi

Kurt Vonnegut is a great author to study for senior research if you like historical science-fiction stories, and sarcastic social commentary. I loved the books I read by him, and I usually don't enjoy books about historical events. Of the three books I read, Slaughterhouse-Five, Cat's Cradle, and Sirens of Titan; my favorite was Slaughterhouse-Five. His stories move really quickly and are full of very interesting characters. There is a common theme of human folly and how humans will eventually bring about their own downfall. His books pose many interesting ideas and questions about why everything happens and what our purpose here on Earth really is. Vonnegut himself was born during the Great Depression and later served in World War II, so his life was filled with many hardships. He overcame these by writing sarcastic and witty science fiction novels that addressed historical events such as the bombing of Dresden in WWII, as well as the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Mixed into these novels are other elements like time travel, space, aliens, and made-up religions. Since his books are so wild, analyzing his works in the research paper is not too bad, because there are always new hidden meanings in his stories. I definitely recommend Vonnegut as an AP author for anyone who likes war, action, adventure, and sarcasm!

### **Kurt Vonnegut** by Ray Jeselonis

Kurt Vonnegut is easily one of the most interesting authors I have ever encountered. It was certainly not difficult to find literary criticisms on him because he was so controversial with his writing because of his different views on trending worldwide topics. If you are worried about having a lack of sources to derive criticisms from (much like I was), rest assure that you will not have this problem with Vonnegut. However, some of his books are a little tough to get through. Though his works tend to be short in length, he uses very unique language and sometimes the plots are really scattered which makes his books a little hard to follow. They are interesting, but you need to be *very* focused when sitting down to read them. If you like/don't mind a bit of

challenge, choose Vonnegut. The three books that I read were *Slaughterhouse-Five* (his “claim to fame”), *Breakfast of Champions*, and *Cat’s Cradle*. I would definitely recommend reading *SH-5* and *Cat’s Cradle*, they are both great books and a pretty light read considering Vonnegut’s intricate style. *Breakfast of Champions*, however, was really lengthy and left me totally scatterbrained. I would recommend choosing one of his later novels along with the other two that I previously suggested. His biography is very interesting and I did not find myself struggling to meet the five page requirement, likewise the second paper was easy to write as well because the reference databases are chock full of information about Vonnegut and his books. If you like morbid, bold, science fiction novels full of symbolism and a unique style, Kurt Vonnegut is the author for you.

### **Kurt Vonnegut** by Charlotte Hyde

I went into senior research loving Kurt Vonnegut, and I came out of it feeling like I was one with his beautiful soul. That being said, however, I do feel that his style is very polarizing – either you love him or you hate him. Vonnegut’s books are not for everyone; they are usually bizarre, nonlinear, nonsensical, and equally depressing and uplifting. When I read *Cat’s Cradle* for the first time, I had to rethink the way I live my life. That’s what Vonnegut’s books do to you. For most of the book you have literally no idea what’s going on, and then at the very end it all comes together in a huge “aha” moment that may initiate a premature existential crisis. While frustrating at times, this literary quality makes his books super fun to analyze. For research purposes, I read *Cat’s Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. All three books can be tied together in countless ways, so if you choose Vonnegut, you won’t have any trouble coming up with a thesis. As an added bonus, all of his books are short and very engaging. Vonnegut’s life is pretty interesting as well, so you won’t be bored on that side of the spectrum either. If I could do senior research again, I would choose Vonnegut for a second time just so that I could read more of his books and get a definitive count of how many kids he actually had. So it goes.

### **Kurt Vonnegut** – Chris O’Keefe

If you like novels that are easy to read and humorous, yet provoke deep thoughts about humanity, then Kurt Vonnegut is the author for you. He lived a very interesting life, having struggled through the Great Depression and World War II, so writing the biographical portion of the research was quite easy. The second portion of the research was slightly tougher though. I read *Slaughterhouse-Five* (his most popular work), *Breakfast of Champions*, and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. Each book is not very long and not very difficult in terms of style. He writes short, straight-forward paragraphs with breaks in between a lot of them, which was great for me since I find huge blocks of text to be pretty daunting. In terms of plot, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions* were somewhat difficult to follow. *SH-5* contains elements of time travel which introduces multiple settings and a large number of characters in short period of time. *Breakfast of Champions* was slightly easier, but still confusing at points since it follows two plots that converge at the end. I found many criticisms on these two books, but I had some difficulty with *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* since it is the least popular of the three, yet it was also my favorite. Overall, Vonnegut is an amazing satirist that provides social commentary on important topics such as war and technology. His humor is somewhat morbid, but still entertaining all the way through.



### **Kurt Vonnegut** by Eli Ratner

As long as you're willing to keep an open mind, you will have a wonderful time reading Kurt Vonnegut's many wacky works. His novels feature a heavy science fiction influence, however transcend one style, and rather incorporate facets of historical fiction among other many other styles; this is, in my opinion, one of Vonnegut's best qualities. His novels are generally short and extremely enjoyable to read because of their creative plots and clever black humour. It is unlikely that you will ever get bored while reading Vonnegut. His works can be confusing, however and can require the reader to suspend their traditional views of literature in order to understand what is going on (at times you'll simply have to accept that you don't know what's going on).

While enjoyable and easy to read, researching and writing about Vonnegut can be a bit more difficult, while plenty of information exists, because Vonnegut was so bizarre, at times criticisms can be complex and confusing, and organizing your own thoughts in a way that is understandable can be a challenge. It is, however, very easy to find a way to link his works together as they are all very similar and researching his works is endlessly interesting. Vonnegut is certainly not a typical author, but he is definitely worth reading!

### **Kurt Vonnegut** by Cooper Wigglesworth

Sick of novels about classic American families struggling? Tired of reading books that try to be too sophisticated? Want to actually understand "humor" rather than have to look up what the references are online? Look no further; Kurt Vonnegut is here. Kurt Vonnegut was one of, if not the, most entertaining authors I have read in high school. His novels were also like no other, not following a prairie family or a medieval kingdom. Instead, he uses aliens and made-up science and other science fiction fun to make the books enjoyable. Vonnegut also has a great sense of humor, making plenty of completely inappropriate references throughout. Perhaps the most lasting piece of his novels is the persuasive aspect. I felt that I have been genuinely influenced by his novels, changing my beliefs on certain American issues for the better. Not only this, but the thesis was easy as well. Each novel vaguely connected over the satire and criticism, making a full essay a breeze. 10/10 would pick Kurt Vonnegut again.

### **Alice Walker** by Morgan Sydlowski

I did my senior research on the author Alice Walker. She is most commonly known for writing The Color Purple. I did enjoy doing my project on Walker because her books did not contain a complicated plot and were not hard to interpret. Each book that I read by her was about a black women looking to find herself while dealing with adversity. They each had a similar theme of feministic independency. The only part I found difficult was finding a criticism of Walker's lesser known books. There were very few of them that I could find for the other two books I had read.

I would recommend this author to someone who likes to be relaxed when reading. Walker's writing has a soft flow to it that makes it seem more realistic. There are no dragons, wizards, or vampires in her books so if you like sci-fi or if you like to imagine unrealistic things, then do not

pick Alice Walker as your author. If you are a person who is interested in feminism, meditation, or black women history, then Alice Walker is the author for you!

#### **Alice Walker** by Lauren Gonthier

I highly recommend Alice Walker for senior research. Her novels are extremely interesting and differ from books that are normally read in school. She applies common themes of racism and sexism into original plot lines, which help educate people of the issues that take place at this time. Walker is a spokeswoman for many social issues, something that can be seen throughout her books. I really love Walker because of her stance on important issues, especially because it is really easy to come up with a thesis connecting all of her books. If you chose Alice Walker, I suggest that you read *The Color Purple* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (companion of *The Color Purple*). For a third book, I read *The Temple of My Familiar* but it did not fit my thesis as well as the other books did, and did not contain the same themes as the other two books, so if I was doing this again, I would definitely choose a different book. I found that there was a lot of information on her and her books (except from *The Temple of My Familiar*) so my research was pretty easy. I loved learning about Alice Walker and reading her unique books!

#### **Edith Wharton** by Noah Kligerman

Edith Wharton is very much her own author. She is in a class of her own whether you think her a good author or a bad one. For one, she is a very descriptive author. Each chapter and new setting is dubiously described through use of imagery and plenty of similes. Even during the chapters and dialogue, each detail is mentioned in full. All in all someone reading works by Edith Wharton should like description. The thing I liked about this aspect of her writing is that she paints a very good picture and was easily able to put myself into the setting and fly through her books. An aspect evident in all of her writing is love, and not only love, but some type of unconventional or inappropriate love. There are plenty of plot turns and suspense, not in an action sense, but in more of an emotional sense. Personally I would certainly recommend Edith Wharton to anyone because of her expert description that helps someone to truly understand her novels.

#### **Edith Wharton** by Eva Terzis

Edith Wharton was a unique writer who wrote about what she knew. Each of her novels can be traced back to events that happened in her life, as well as her views upon society and its negative aspects. For some, this hint of realism can create too much of a bleak tone, but I found it to be the perfect dose of down-to-earth literature. Wharton's novels captivate the reader by creating realistic situations and articulating the feelings, as well as settings, with vivid imagery. What makes this author so interesting is how her novels can be unraveled to parallel her life. From

romantic struggles and disillusionment, to the importance of women's rights, Edith Wharton's attention-grabbing work is definitely worth studying.

### **Edith Wharton** by Emily Martin

Edith Wharton is an author that expresses her feministic views and strong societal beliefs throughout her literature. She is a strongly opinionated woman that does not allow the restrictions of the time period in which she lived to influence the decisions that she makes. Unlike most authors of the late 1800s and early 1900s, Edith Wharton is known for discussing topics that go against the beliefs of the society around her. There are numerous instances where Wharton incorporates aspects of her own life into her writing, including infidelity and divorce. One of her most well known pieces of literature is the story of Ethan Frome. This novel is a relatively quick read and one that I really enjoyed. In AP Literature, Ethan Frome is assigned to the class so it is also one less book you have to worry about reading on top of all the other ones. This novel may be one of my favorite pieces of literature that we read throughout the year; however, for the senior research project, you are required to read three books on the author you choose and after Ethan Frome the quality of her novels seems to deteriorate. In my opinion, The Age of Innocence was pretty painful to read; however, there are more novels to choose from by Edith Wharton. The Bunner Sisters was the last book that I chose to read for my project and, in my opinion, it was a decent book. I would choose this one over The Age of Innocence any day.

I would recommend Edith Wharton to anyone who has strong feministic views like she does. Personally, I think there may be better choices out there but her novels are relatively easy to read and easy to follow.

### **Edith Wharton** by Emily Pugh

Edith Wharton is an interesting and powerful author to study because she wrote using her first-hand experiences as inspiration. The biography aspect of this project was intriguing because many clear parallels can be drawn from her works to her life. Most of her novels are set in New York high society, which she grew up in, so her novels give a realistic picture, while at the same time being satirical. Her novels are easy to comprehend because she is very obvious with stating the social commentaries she is making. However, the plot is not exactly action-packed; it is more to do with characters' emotional struggles and has heavy description. She writes about an old-fashioned time period that may not appeal to a lot of people. If you choose Edith Wharton, be sure to choose the Age of Innocence as one of your books. It can be a little difficult to get through but is considered her masterpiece and very representative of her writing and the themes that she uses. I would only recommend Edith Wharton to someone who enjoyed reading Ethan Frome in class because even though it is an anomaly of her works (it is not set in New York), it is characteristic of her style of writing.

### **Edith Wharton** by Jill Hadwen

I will admit, Edith Wharton is not for everyone. However, if you are like me and loved reading *Ethan Frome*, than you should not let other people's opinions deter you from selecting one of the most influential American writers of the late nineteenth century. Her novels are characterized by unconditional love stories riddled with feminism and irony, and they reflect many of the events of her life. Edith Wharton is a social commentator, and she has given me a new perspective on feminism.

If you have an interest in social issues that surrounded late nineteenth and early twentieth century, then I highly recommend choosing Edith Wharton as your author. Since *Ethan Frome* is the first book you read in AP Lit, Wharton is also a very easy author to do. I personally found her life very interesting. There is a nice biography of her in the school library that shares some of the most intimate (and interesting) details of her life. Wharton has many novels to choose from. I chose *Ethan Frome*, *The Age of Innocence*, and *Bunner Sisters*. My favorite novel was the later because of its brevity and hilarious irony, but it was difficult to find literary criticism on it. Keep this in mind when selecting your three books!! *The Age of Innocence* was probably my least favorite because it took forever to get to the point. However, *The Age of Innocence* is a classic, and it is a crucial part of the Edith Wharton legacy. Just be patient with it! No matter which Edith Wharton novels you chose, it will be incredibly easy to find a theme that ties her works together. This will be extremely important for the final paper.

Whatever AP Author you select, make sure it is someone you are genuinely interested in. If you select the right author for you, you will gain a whole new perspective.

### **Edith Wharton** by Haley Gendell

Let me preface this review by saying that Edith Wharton is certainly not for everyone. If you are not a fan of dramatic love affairs or incredibly detailed descriptions of settings, I would pass on Wharton. However, if you enjoy dramatic tales of wealthy society and appreciate well-humored sarcasm and feminism, then Edith Wharton could be the author for you. I highly suggest Edith Wharton to anyone who is a fan of the TV show *Gossip Girl*. Trust me, you will appreciate her works so much if you are familiar with a modern version of the societies she speaks of. Edith Wharton is pretty easy to do because *Ethan Frome* is the first book you read in AP Lit. *Ethan Frome* is great but make sure you read at least one book by her that takes place in New York City because that is where her true writing talents are. There is an awesome biography in the library that will help you greatly with your biography paper. Additionally, most of her works connect back to her life and there are many themes that appear in all of her works, making your literary criticism paper fairly easy as well. I read *The Age of Innocence*, *Ethan Frome*, and *The House of Mirth* and it was incredibly easy to find themes that connected the three books.

My biggest advice regarding senior research is to pick an author you actually enjoy. Take the time over the summer to experiment and research some authors so you know you're picking the author that's right for you. That will make the project much more enjoyable and eye-opening!

### **Oscar Wilde in Review** by Jon Tedford

"An idea that is not dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all."

Senior research is an experience in itself, and choosing Oscar Wilde will make it that much more memorable. Oscar Wilde is a renowned author, poet, and playwright. Since Wilde is a versatile writer, it gives a certain amount of flexibility in the way you wish to read and present the works of literature. The challenging component to reading Oscar Wilde's works is finding the true underlying message that lurks under dense descriptions and difficult story lines. I particularly enjoyed The Picture of Dorian Gray, along with this I read *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Oscar Wilde's scandalous life influences every piece of literature that he wrote. Wilde was known for living a life against the common beliefs of his time period. The benefit to this lifestyle is that there is quite a bit of information regarding his personal life. I would highly recommend Oscar Wilde as your senior research author because learning about someone who has such a shocking life will be far more interesting than an author who lived quietly in the country side.

### **Oscar Wilde** by Pat Hopkins

Before I begin specifically with my review of Wilde, I have some more general knowledge that I would like to share about senior research. Now, in your position (I'm assuming you are someone who will be starting the project quite soon) I'm sure the months ahead look like a trip through a fiery expanse of doom. Let me assure you that they're not. Though it seems like the deadlines will be overwhelming, and that you will be overtaken by work, it is not really that bad. The project can be quite fun, and I am proud of my work overall. I'm sure you will be too. Now, let's move onto Oscar Wilde.

Wilde's life was filled with conflict and was extremely tumultuous, to say the least. With that being said, it is quite easy to find biographical information on him. The literary reference center has dozens of articles discussing his life, and even online one can find mounds of information (on his very own website, for example). However, what I found most difficult about this project was the literary analysis of his work. Wilde, though his personal ideals can be found evidently in his plays, wrote for the sake of the performance. When writing his plays, he was less concerned with a deep, embedded message (though some do surface) and more about writing plays that were interesting, comical, that drew an audience. Finding literary criticisms for Wilde is difficult as well. There are a few sources on the literary reference center, but they don't do a very good

job of analyzing the play. The sources generally critique the performances, giving little insight unto what they thought Wilde was trying to accomplish.

Despite all these difficulties, I thoroughly enjoyed studying Wilde. He was definitely one of the more interesting authors, and his life was surrounded in controversy. Through studying his life, I learned a lot about British society during the time as well. If you do choose Wilde, know that it is difficult, but quite worth it at the end.

### **Oscar Wilde** by Siobhan Dolan

I genuinely loved studying Oscar Wilde. He's an absolutely brilliant writer, philosopher, and human being, I don't think that there is a more interesting person to spend four months researching. While no author on this list lived a truly boring life, Wilde's is especially interesting because of all the turmoil that he lived through. I found it very enjoyable to learn about and I really do highly recommend him.

Honestly, Wilde was easy. Biographical information about him runs abound- it's literally impossible not to find at least four sources for your first paper. He lived a high-profile, scandalous life that has sparked numerous biographies and analytical papers, all of which can be really helpful when you're creating your first thesis. I also found it really fun to write about his life simply because of its tumultuous and dramatic nature.

The only thing that is slightly tricky about Wilde is finding criticisms to fit the thesis of your second paper. While there are just about as many literary criticisms of Wilde's work as there are stars in the sky, not all of them will be useful to you. Of course, that's true with any author, but because Wilde's plays and book are so rich in subtext there's a lot of stuff to analyze which makes it harder to find a critique that supports your own theories. I suggest reading both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* because, as Wilde's most famous works, they have the most criticisms. Some of his less popular plays don't have as many viable critiques, which can really make forming a thesis hard.

### **Oscar Wilde** by John Gadbois

I would recommend Oscar Wilde for senior research. Not only has he had an eventful life, but wrote hilarious plays that are a joy to read. Personally I was never a big reader, so I wanted an author that didn't have tremendously long books. Oscar Wilde was perfect for me because two out of the three books I read were plays. This makes them a lot easier and more fun to read in my opinion. His plays are filled with wit that make reading it incredibly fun and quick. The only tricky aspect with Oscar Wilde worry about is the topic to link all three of his works together. I attempted to focus on aestheticism, a belief that all art should be purely from the soul, which was very prevalent in some of his works, like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. However in other works, this theme was not as pronounced which made incorporating the other books in my paper rather

difficult. If I was able to rewrite a paper on Oscar Wilde, I would focus more on his use of sarcasm and word play to criticize society.

### **Oscar Wilde** by Spencer Moavenzadeh

#### The Importance of Being Oscar

Oscar Wilde's life story is quite a dazzling but tragic spectacle. He has a gift for the daring – humorous volumes of satire, guts to dress as scandalously as he did, and the lack of decency to have a care in the world – and his life story could serve as an intriguing fictional story in and of itself. In some regards, Wilde is a professional bunburyist, and his flamboyant, witty style has made him a literary superstar. Though traditionally thought of as a playwright (which makes reading three literary works much easier), Wilde published one novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and it's absolutely brilliant!

Finding an author that is both intriguing and captivating makes senior research a breeze. Oscar Wilde fits this profile extremely well – simply Google search “Oscar Wilde Famous Quotes” and you'll find out why.

I strongly recommend him for senior research because you will find tremendous ease in writing and presenting both research papers. More importantly, you will enjoy doing so.

### **Oscar Wilde** by Melissa Pratt

I really enjoyed doing my project on Oscar Wilde. He had a really interesting life, so it was more enjoyable to write a paper on his biography. I also really like his works. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was a really good read, and *The Importance of Being Earnest* was a really fun play. The play didn't have language that was difficult to read and was surprisingly funny. *Salome* was another play I read that was interesting, but it had a lot of biblical allusions in it that I didn't initially catch or understand. I'd highly recommend doing Oscar Wilde if you want your project to be enjoyable.

### **Tennessee Williams** by Elly Theriault

I highly recommend the playwright Tennessee Williams as an author for senior research. The interesting story and life of this author mirrors his main characters, which helps by making the presentation more intriguing. Williams' works are quick reads and fairly easy to comprehend; it is also not too difficult to find criticisms on his plays. He has a unique writing style and perspective that makes him different from anyone else. Williams' plays are known for their abundance of symbols, irony, humor and weak, vulnerable characters that produce strong messages. I thought this author was a fantastic choice, and I think that most people would really enjoy him for their research project.

### **Tennessee Williams**-by Sarah McCullough

Tennessee Williams is a great American playwright. I would highly recommend him as a research author. His plays are short and are very easy to understand but hold great meaning and contain themes that mirror our daily lives in society. Williams was a very interesting character and many of his plays incorporated his own life in their plot and characters. This makes for an interesting way to present his life and also a good topic for the research paper. There are many criticisms of Williams' works and he has written many plays so there is something to read for everyone. He definitely deserves to be on the AP author list and would be a great choice as a research author.

### **Tennessee Williams**-by Wesley Morris

I recommend Tennessee Williams to anyone who is looking for an extremely interesting playwright. His plays are filled with fascinating conflicts and unusual characters. While reading a few of his plays, I found them to be a simple read; however, the true meaning and conflicts were sometimes difficult to grasp. It is fairly simple to find information and criticism about this author. Most of themes and plots have a close relationship and resemblance with each other. This made finding and creating a thesis one of the simplest parts of the entire project. I guarantee that choosing Tennessee Williams will not be a disappointment, for he is one of the most interesting authors I have ever learned about.

### **August Wilson** by Arman Sanentz

Let's be honest here, have you even heard of August Wilson? Right. Exactly. You most likely haven't. This was my exact reasoning for choosing him – to go out on a limb and try something new. Well, what came out was a story about one of the most prominent African American authors who didn't receive the popularity that many others did. His short, humorous, and conversational plays provide insight into certain cultural aspects of the time frame that they were set in. All and all, he was able to document the transition of African Americans in America through the entire 20<sup>th</sup> Century through a collection of plays known as the Pittsburgh Cycle. Reaching Broadway and achieving a plethora of reviews from critics, Wilson was able to provide substantial amounts of information to base a strong paper on. Although he passed away in 2005, Wilson's legacy and story is one filled with struggle, passion, and dedication, throwing him into the vast list of potential AP authors.

### **August Wilson** by Luke Boland

After completing my research on August Wilson, I must say that August Wilson is truly deserved of the title of a great AP Literature author. August Wilson set a precedent for African American playwrights by writing about controversial racial topics that startled the primarily white audience at the time. Reading through his plays, the obvious themes of racism and discrimination come up and it allows the reader to recognize a different environment than we have in Amesbury. Wilson



writes stories about inner city Pittsburgh in a poverty-stricken neighborhood where the reader is exposed to violent arguments and interactions. I would recommend reading August Wilson's works primarily for the reason that his stories strongly contrast the lifestyle in Amesbury by bringing forth painful truths about living in city landscape where racism is prevalent and African Americans struggle even to survive. Another advantage of choosing Wilson for your research project is that his plays are straightforward and fairly short. The plotline in his plays come from the same basic scenario so finding a common thread through the plays is not difficult at all. The plays all contain dialogue and make the stories more free-flowing and easy to read than traditional books. Lastly, it helps that all of his plays have a corresponding movie that bring to light visually the setting and environment of the story for those that learn aesthetically.

### **Virginia Woolf** by Savannah Champion

Virginia Woolf is a fascinating author to study, but she is certainly not an easy one. Her books can be difficult to follow at times, and since she is not quite as renowned as some of the other authors on the list it is slightly more difficult to find good biographical and critical resources to base your paper around. That being said, I think that anyone who is up for a challenge should give Virginia Woolf a shot. Though sometimes hard to read, her books are very well written and stylized in a very unique way. There were obstacles on the way to completing a project on Woolf, but all in all I think it was worth it.

### **Virginia Woolf** by Sarai Smith

If you are considering spending a semester studying Virginia Woolf for your senior research presentation, be sure you know what you're getting yourself into. If you want books that are easy to read and interpret, try a different author. Woolf writes primarily in the stream-of-consciousness style which makes her work difficult to analyze. Most of her books also lack a definite plot or even, in some cases, a main character. There is plenty of information and criticisms on her work and life both online and in the library, so you won't struggle to find what you need for the project. Don't get me wrong, it was very interesting to read books of this style and to learn about her shocking life, but I think I would choose a different author if I could go back and do it again. If you're up for a challenge and you have an open mind, give Woolf a shot. Best of luck!

